

**Bush: The Recap**

**By Sam Farr**

***Good Times*, Santa Cruz, Calif.**

**Sept. 17, 2009**

As this paper hits the newsstands, we only have 47 days left until we cast our ballots on Election Day. After a primary season that seemed to last forever, the final exam in this process is charging at us like a locomotive.

But since I'm sure you're going to be overwhelmed with candidate paraphernalia in the coming weeks, I'd like to use this chance to look back at the last 95 months of President Bush's White House tenure.

Let's begin with our economy, which we all know is hurting. Families across the Central Coast and the nation realize this. Since the president took office in January 2001, 3.4 million more people are unemployed and the unemployment rate has jumped from 4.2 percent to 6.1 percent.

What about the stock market? The Dow Jones has increased a total of 7 percent in more than seven years of Bush leadership. Compare that to an average growth per year of 28.3 percent under President Clinton.

Nearly 6 million more Americans are living in poverty compared to 2001, and our housing market is in shambles. Curious how an advisor for Senator McCain says we're in a "mental recession" and we're just "a nation of whiners."

We're also enmeshed in an occupation of Iraq that began as a debacle and just grew from there. In fact, the war in Iraq now tops the length of American involvement in World War II.

This war has led to the death of more than 4,000 soldiers and wounded 30,000 more. And the

final tab for this adventure could easily top projections of \$3 trillion-a mind-boggling amount of money. The list of what we could have done with that money stretches for pages and pages.

And what of the war in Afghanistan, the war to root out the Taliban and make sure Osama bin Laden never attacked our country again? Adm. Michael Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, recently said he is "not convinced we're winning" and we're running out of time. No wonder, since the president was quoted six years ago saying bin Laden was not a priority.

Our health care system fares no better. Since 2000, the number of Americans who lack health insurance has increased by 7.2 million. Almost one in nine children do not have health insurance, a number inflated by the president's refusal to expand the federally funded children's health insurance program. We need serious reform of our health care system, which is in danger of collapsing under its own weight, dragging down millions of families with it.

Health care isn't the only issue that is buckling. President Bush succeeded in turning a projected 10-year budget surplus of \$5.6 trillion into a projected 10-year deficit of \$3.4 trillion. Under Bush, we have seen five of the largest single-year budget deficits ever. The first 42 presidents borrowed a total of \$1 trillion from financial institutions and foreign governments. Bush, in seven years, has borrowed \$1.6 trillion. The national debt has nearly doubled under Bush's watch.

And what about those gas prices? While the cost of a gallon of gas has fallen in the last few weeks, filling up the tank is still a heavy burden for families. As I write this column, Democratic leaders are working on a compromise energy bill that addresses a wide swath of policy areas. I'll wait to see what comes out of those negotiations, but rest assured that California, through the work of our congressional delegation and the promise of our governor, will not see oil rigs off our shores.

So what does this all mean? I have said time and time again that whoever is sworn in as our 44th president will face an array of crises unlike any other rookie president. We're standing at a turning point in the history of our nation, a watershed that will help determine in what direction our future lies.

It's vital that our Election Day turnout is as hearty as possible. As many Americans as possible must exercise their right to vote. Use the next six weeks well. Take a long look at how each of the presidential candidates stands on issues that are important to you.

More than just your future is at stake in November.